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[REDACTED] EXAMINER

CHAMPAGNE, DONALD

[REDACTED] ART UNIT

[REDACTED] PAPER NUMBER

3622

DATE MAILED: 09/24/2003

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Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/850,263

Applicant(s)

JACOBI ET AL.

Examiner

Donald L. Champagne

Art Unit

3622

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears in the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 06 January 2003.
- 2a) This action is FINAL. 2b) This action is non-final.
- 3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) Claim(s) 1-60 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) Claim(s) 33-54 is/are allowed.
- 6) Claim(s) 1-12, 14-28, 30-32 and 55-60 is/are rejected.
- 7) Claim(s) 13 and 29 is/are objected to.
- 8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) The drawing(s) filed on 07 May 2001 is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) The proposed drawing correction filed on _____ is: a) approved b) disapproved by the Examiner.
If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) All b) Some * c) None of:
1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).
a) The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

- 1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) _____.
4) Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____.
5) Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
6) Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Proposed Examiner's Amendment

1. Attorney Ronald J. Schoenbaum agreed on 24 January 2003 to cancel claims 1-32 by examiner's amendment so that claims 33-60 could be allowed. A review of the proposed allowance resulted in an Office decision to reject claims 55-60, as indicated in the following non-final rejection, para. 17-20. The agreement to cancel claims 1-32 is therefore voided, and the last rejection of these claims is repeated below, para. 2-16. The Office at this time has not questioned the allowance of claims 33-54.

Response to Arguments

2. Applicant's arguments filed with an amendment on 6 January 2003 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. The arguments are discussed at para. 8 and 9 below.

Claim Objections

3. Claims 13 and 29 are objected to under 37 CFR 1.75 as respectively being substantial duplicates of claims 55 and 58. When two claims in an application are duplicates or else are so close in content that they both cover the same thing, despite a slight difference in wording, it is proper after allowing one claim to object to the other as being a substantial duplicate of the allowed claim. See MPEP § 706.03(k).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102 and 35 USC § 103

4. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

Art Unit: 3622

5. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negatived by the manner in which the invention was made.
6. Claims 1, 2, 5, 7-9, 14, 15, 17, 18, 21, 23-25, 30 and 31 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Whiteis.
7. Whiteis teaches (independent claims 1 and 17) a method and system for recommending items to users from a database of items, the method comprising: providing a table (*L/NKS table 301*) that maps items from the database to respective sets of similar items, wherein the table includes values (*Link Weight 304*) that indicate degrees of similarity between specific items, said values reflecting an automated analysis of historical data (col. 2 lines 2-3) indicating item interests of each of a plurality of users (col. 3 lines 43-51); and identifying multiple items selected by the target user without requiring the target user to explicitly rate items (col. 3 lines 14-15 and 39-42); and selecting similar items (*Result Item 402*) from the table to recommend to the target user such that a determination of whether to recommend a particular similar item takes into consideration a degree to which that similar item is similar to each of the multiple items selected by the target user (the *LinksTo Weight 353*), as indicated by the table (col. 3 lines 52-64).
8. Applicant argues (Remarks, p. 4) that Whiteis does not teach or suggest identifying multiple items selected by the target user “without requiring the target user to explicitly rate items or explicitly create an input list of items”. The reference does not teach *rating* items, which always has the connotation of quantification or at least ranking (Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary).
9. The reference does require that “the user chooses the items he knows he likes from a master list of items”. Applicant argues that this constitutes explicitly creating an input list of items, which is expressly precluded by amended claims 1 and 17. But this line of reasoning is not consistent with the specification. The disclosure distinguishes between “explicit” and “implicit” development of lists only by example at p. 12 lines 12-14. There it is disclosed that items added to a shopping cart constitute an implicit, not an explicit, expression of interest.

Art Unit: 3622

That is a specie to the reference's genus (para. 12 below). Furthermore, dependent claims 5 and 21 are also species of a reference teaching (para. 10 below). Hence, by the application's examples of what is consistent with claims 1 and 17, the reference selections are implicit, not explicit.

10. The reference also teaches at the citations given above claims 2 and 18; 7 and 23 (inherently, from the similarity definition of *Link Weight 304*); 8, 9, 24 and 25; and 15 and 31 (inherently, because all content is downloadable).
11. The reference also teaches claims 5 and 21 (col. 2 lines 23-26),
12. Claims 3, 4, 6, 10-12, 16, 19, 20, 22, 26-28 and 32 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being obvious over Whiteis.
13. Whiteis does not teach (claims 3, 4, 10, 19, 20 and 26) an electronic shopping cart. The reference does teach the genus "items that the user chooses, knows he likes, and may want to purchase" (col. 3 lines 14-15 and col. 2 lines 23-26), which would strongly suggest the specie "electronic shopping cart" to one of ordinary skill in the art, at the time of the invention. The reference also does not teach (claims 6 and 22) that the items were selected by the target user through online browsing. Because virtually all shopping entails some browsing, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, at the time of the invention, to add the selection of items by online browsing to the teaching of Whiteis.
14. Whiteis does not teach (claims 11 and 27) not recommending items already purchased. Because there would be no point in recommending items already purchased, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, at the time of the invention, to not recommending items already purchased.
15. Whiteis does not teach (claims 12 and 28) further determining similarity by content analysis of item descriptions. Because content analysis is well known for similarity determination and could provide marginal advantages, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, at the time of the invention, to further determining similarity by content analysis of item descriptions.
16. Whiteis does not teach (claims 16 and 32) that the table is stored as a B-tree data structure. Because it is a well-known structure providing efficient lookup, it would have been obvious

Art Unit: 3622

to one of ordinary skill in the art, at the time of the invention, to store the table as a B-tree data structure.

17. Claims 55-60 are rejected under 35 USC 103 as unpatentable over Whiteis (US pat. 5,749,081) in view of Bieganski (US pat. 6,321,221).
18. Whiteis teaches (independent claims 55 and 58) a method of recommending items to users from a database of items, the method comprising: providing a table (LINKS table 301) that maps items from the database to respective sets of similar items, wherein the table includes values (Link Weight 304) that indicate degrees of similarity between specific items, said values reflecting an automated analysis of historical data (col. 2, lines 2-3) indicating item interests of each of a plurality of users (col. 3, lines 43-51); and using the table to provide personalized item recommendations to each of a plurality of target users, wherein the personalized item recommendations are generated for a target user by at least: identifying multiple items selected by the target user (col. 3, lines 14-15 and 39-42); and selecting similar items (Result Item 402) from the table to recommend to the target user such that a determination of whether to recommend a particular similar item takes into consideration a degree to which that similar item is similar to each of the multiple items selected by the target user (the LinksTo Weight 353), as indicated by the table (col. 3, lines 52-64).
19. Whiteis does not teach that the "personalized item recommendations are generated for a target user *in real time*". Bieganski teaches that the recommendations are returned in real time (col. 7, lines 14-15). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to add the teachings of Bieganski to Whiteis (i.e., to return the recommendations of Whiteis in real time) in order to improve the response time and to make the system more user friendly in that the customer does not have to wait an inordinate amount of time for a recommendation.
20. Bieganski also teaches claims 56 and 59 (col. 7 lines 6-11) and claims 57 and 60 (col. 17 lines 12-15).

Allowable Subject Matter

21. Claims 33-54 are allowed. See the last Office action (Paper No. 10 mailed 19 March 2003) for reasons for allowance.

Conclusion

22. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Donald L Champagne whose telephone number is 703-308-3331. The examiner can normally be reached from 6:30 AM to 5 PM ET, Monday to Thursday. The examiner can also be contacted by e-mail at donald.champagne@uspto.gov, and *informal* fax communications (i.e., communications not to be made of record) may be sent directly to the examiner at 703-746-5536.
23. The examiner's supervisor, Eric Stamber, can be reached on 703-305-8469. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306. Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is 703-306-5771.
24. **ABANDONMENT** – If examiner cannot by telephone verify applicant's intent to continue prosecution, the application is subject to abandonment six months after mailing of the last Office action. The agent, attorney or applicant point of contact is responsible for assuring that the Office has their telephone number. Agents and attorneys may verify their registration information including telephone number at the Office's web site, www.uspto.gov. At the top of the home page, click on Site Index. Then click on Agent & Attorney Roster in the alphabetic list, and search for your registration by your name or number.


Donald L. Champagne
Examiner
Art Unit 3622

20 September 2003